

Survey results

Introduction

The survey was sent out to the 32 partner library authorities with whom we were working. Of these, 13 (41%) responded with a completed survey form; 10 others (31%) e-mailed me some information or telephoned, and I have included both sorts of responses in this summary. One authority decided that it did not wish to respond at this stage.

My thanks to all those who responded:

Returned the survey

Ruth White (Bexley)
Janet Randall (Bristol)
Michaela Dungate (Cornwall)
Grace McElwee (Croydon)
Fran Renwick (Derby City)
Lucy Love (Enfield)
Sharon Fletcher (Essex)
Michelle Herriman (Milton Keynes)
Marguerite Dike (Poole)
Lynne Craigs (Tameside SLS)
Trish Botten (Warwickshire)
Sarah Hillier (Wiltshire)
Alison Jones & Nicky Copley (York)

Sent details/'phone calls/e-mails

Sue Hyland (Buckinghamshire)
Richard Young (Cambridgeshire)
Rob Jones (Isle of Wight)
Jean Wolstenholme (Lancashire)
Andy Cooke (Leicestershire)
Wendy Bond (Lincolnshire)
Lindy Elliott (Portsmouth)
Barbara Magee (West Berkshire)
Lesley Sim (West Sussex)
Zoë Dickens (Windsor & Maidenhead)

Services provided

Please could you list the main services you provide (or intend to provide) for looked after children?

Are providing:

- Professional advice/support in providing homework resources/Specific staff in Study Support Centre – 5
- Book collections for children's homes/Care homes have 20-books library tickets/Advice to Care Homes on their provision – 5
- Book gifting scheme for LAC/foster carers/young people in hostels – 4
- Same as for all children and young people (eg book loans, free Internet access, video and CD hire to over-12s, holiday activities, pre-school storytimes, study support, access to ICT) – 4
- Sessions for foster carers on using books with children – 3
- Helping children build their own personal libraries/'Consultation' sessions with librarians – 3
- Information in local newsletter for foster carers/Worked with foster carers support groups – 2

- Book Groups/Reading Champions in children's homes – 2
- Encourage library use/participation in activities/fun visits to libraries – 2
- Free music CD loan vouchers to support school attendance incentive scheme/Book Token incentives + 'treats' – 2
- Targeting LAC for involvement in Reading Groups/activities/Summer Reading Challenge – 2
- Reading Challenge scheme for LAC – 1
- Preparation of starter packs for foster carers – 1
- Library joining packs for all LAC – 1
- Special tickets for foster families to enable them to have additional books at home – 1
- "Star Challenge" incentive scheme – rewards library use with book tokens – 1
- Corporate Parenting Service bought Storysacks – 1
- Programme of after school reader development sessions – 1
- Laptops for loan – 1
- Induction/welcome sessions for LAC and foster carers – 1
- Establishing virtual readers' circles – 1
- Working with refugee young people – 1

Are considering/hope to provide:

- Resources for residential homes – 4
- Activities/workshops/reader development activities for young people – 4
- Training for foster carers – 3
- Training for library staff – 2
- Exchangeable book-box for foster carers to use with their children – 1
- Book gifting scheme – 1
- Contribution to welcome packs for foster carers – 1
- Contribution to newsletter for foster carers – 1
- Ensuring that all LAC have a book of their own choice – 1
- Issue of specially encoded library tickets for LAC to allow overdue and replacement book charges to be waived – 1
- Development of a Website – 1
- Annual road-shows at neighbourhood libraries for foster carers – 1
- Training for care home staff – 1
- Training and accreditation for care workers in reader development and literacy – 1
- Closer links between children's librarians and residential centres – 1
- Specific sessions for LAC on People's Network computers – 1
- Sessions to attract LAC at local Literature Festival – 1
- Pilot visits to libraries by LAC to encourage wider usage – 1
- Homework support – 1
- Conference for KS1 children and their carers – 1

- Target foster families as part of Family Learning Weekend – 1

Issues involved in working with looked after children

What do you think are the key specific issues that we need to be aware of when working with looked after children?

- Short-term care and no permanent address/move at a moment's notice/may be problems in getting library materials back – 5
- Disruption of their school/family life/Situation in their lives may affect their attitudes to reading, learning, adults, authority/Circumstances can change daily – 4
- Issues about confidentiality/We've been told not to identify LAC, but how can you then target a service? – 3
- "Libraries are rarely part of the cultural fabric of a family with children in care"/Children may not have encountered books and reading in a positive way – 2
- Children want to be treated 'normally'/Each child is an individual in his/her own right – 2
- Treat each child with respect/sensitivity – 2
- Issues around foster carers and children's home workers signing applications for membership/Joining and registration issues – 2
- Don't make assumptions about LAC/Experience will vary depending on the type of care they have had – 2
- Difficult to monitor/evaluate success and track progress – 2
- Wide age range – 1
- Equalities – ensuring that children receive their entitlements, even if this means bending rules/being more flexible – 1
- Sustainability/embedded into mainstream – 1
- Become aware of their needs by asking them and their carers/parents – 1
- Need to build trust with children and staff – 1
- Partnership working – 1
- Perceptions about costs – 1
- Carers not happy about Internet access – 1
- Low literacy levels – 2
- Language barriers – 1
- Obtaining support of senior management in recognising LAC as a priority group within social inclusion agenda – 1
- Many of the LAC have behavioural/learning difficulties, therefore library staff need to be sensitive to a range of needs – 1
- Books and reading need to be introduced with enthusiasm "to fire their imagination with stories" – 1
- Library staff need training before they commence this work – 1
- Use of staff discretion – 1
- Make every contact with the library service a positive experience – 1

- Good communication with and support from other agencies – 1
- Some carers see visiting the library as just another chore – 1
- Need to spend as much effort with Social Workers, care home staff and foster parents as we do with the children, as they will be the bridge to the services and will support reading day-to-day – 1
- Finding out who/where LAC are – 1

How aware do you think your staff are of these issues?

- Very aware – 1
- Some awareness, but it's an urgent training need – 2
- Children's Librarians who are working directly with LAC and their carers have had training sessions – 2
- Staff have had training, but now need to develop close working relationships with Social Services, care workers, foster carers – 1
- Staff working with children are aware, but need training – 1
- Service-wide, very little awareness, although some libraries have a good relationship with local children's homes – 1
- Not very aware/"On a scale of 1-10, 2" – 3
- I don't have any staff – 1

Partnership working

How successful have you or your staff been in establishing partnerships?

- Very successful strategic partnership with Education and Social Services, plus recognising principle that informal education is important – 1
- Excellent working partnership with staff in residential centres – 1
- Established successful partnerships with Education and Health and Children's Services – 1
- More to do to develop partnerships with foster carers – 1
- Education and Social Services were very receptive to working with us on our bid to PHF – 1
- Corporate Parenting Service has been very easy to work with – 1
- Building partnerships has been easy in terms of motivation and willingness – 1
- Starting to establish partnerships with Social Services, Education, Education Psychology – 1
- Reasonably, but not yet had much to offer – 1
- Groundwork is there as a result of work by Community Cohesion team and Teenage Reading worker – 1
- It's been very slow, but is starting to come together – 1
- Achieved very little, but are continuing to meet and communicate – 1

- We have worked successfully with Social Services and Public Libraries [a Schools Library Service] – 1

What skills have you/they needed? And did you/they have these skills?

- Understand cultures and different priorities/workloads of different departments/understanding the system – 4
- Ability to listen to one another/Communication skills – 2
- Information about LAC – 2
- Negotiation – 1
- Perseverance – 1
- Patience – 1
- Empathy – 1
- “We do have these skills but there is always room for improvement” – 1
- Need to be flexible, to amend plans – 1
- Knowledge of education system – 1
- Staff seem to lack confidence to work in the community – 1
- We need people with community skills – 1

Other issues raised here:

- Libraries have belief in importance of books and reading in all children's lives/Social Services have knowledge and experience of working with LAC/Education have expertise in putting bids together and assessing the potential impact on educational attainment – 1
- Lack of time – 1
- Workloads/priorities has meant that movement has not been as quick as it might have been – 1
- Planning across sets of timetables and deadlines can be cumbersome – 1
- Lack of staff to deliver projects – 1
- Importance of recognising that different agencies have different protocols – 1
- Worked with partners to clarify project aims and outcomes and suggest evaluation – 1
- Willingness to learn from each other – 1
- Partnerships will be sustained as the Children's Librarian remains a local contact for homes staff and children – 1
- Need advocacy materials to promote our case – 1

Which organisations have your staff built partnerships with? Was this straightforward or difficult? Are the partnerships being sustained?

- Social Services – 16
- NCH – 2
- Barnardo's

- Connexions – 4
- Education Service [no specific sections mentioned] – 7
 - Education Support [Community Education] – 1
 - Education Welfare Service – 2
 - Education Psychologists – 1
 - Designated Teachers – 1
 - Pupil and Parent Support – 1

- Other
 - Youth and Community Services – 2
 - Arts and Museum Service – 1
 - “Read On – Write Away” – 1
 - Cultural Services – 1
 - Health – 1
 - Foster Carers organisations – 1
 - NSPCC – 1

- Project worker is an ex-Social Worker (Children) – invaluable – 1
- Partnership(s) being sustained, but not yet produced any results – 1
- Partnership with Social Services difficult to sustain – 1

Outreach, etc

How successful have your staff been in working outside library buildings?

- Staff have a lot of experience working outside library buildings – 5
- Up to now, outreach has meant attending meetings/Providing information workshops for foster carers and Social Services – 2
- Staff seem to lack confidence to work in the community – 1
- Not attempted this with LAC yet – 1
- Not at all – 1

What different skills does this involve, and did your staff have these skills?

- Ability to get on with young people in care/empathy/Listening and counselling skills – 3
- Book knowledge – 2
- Ability to sell libraries to foster carers/Sell the message – 2
- Ability to convey enthusiasm for books and reading – 1
- Persistence – 1
- Understanding of ‘youth culture’ – 1
- Belief in the value of project/reading – 1
- Planning and organisational skills – 1
- Presentational skills – 1
- Training skills – 1
- Skills for presenting sessions to children who do not usually use libraries – 1

- Working with groups of children – 1
- Working one-to-one with children – 1
- Understanding what it means to visit groups as a guest – 1
- Developed professional, personal and social skills – 1
- Awareness of linked-up working – 1
- Who to sign-post families to – 1
- Community skills – 1
- Appear approachable – 1
- Appear informative – 1
- Awareness of issues about LAC – 1
- Dealing with challenging behaviour – 1

- “Our staff have these skills”/”Library staff are generally well trained” – 2

Consultation

Did you consult looked after children about their library, reading and information needs? Was this easy, and what skills did it involve?

- Yes
 - Postal survey to LAC and foster carers – 90 LAC responded – 1
 - Currently consulting, using a variety of methods including taped interviews, questionnaires, etc – 1
 - Consulted LAC who attended the special after-school sessions – we used a questionnaire – 1
 - The team in Education responsible for LAC consulted with them in school – 1
 - Phone survey of LAC – 1
- No – 2
 - but will be shortly – 1
 - but hope to – 3
 - but have done so informally via residential care staff – 1
 - not yet – 1

Skills involved

- Getting the children to trust you – 1
- How to follow up if there is a poor response – 1

Training

What kinds of training has been provided for your staff, and by whom?

- Session on needs of LAC from Social Services/Corporate Parenting – 3
 - Training by Education on homework support needs of LAC – 1
 - Training by Basic Skills Unit on using Storysacks – 1
 - Training from the “Caring with Books” project – 1
 - Customer Care training for staff working with children – 1
 - Training in Child Protection issues – 1
 - Training based on “Their Reading Futures” – 1
 - “Boys and Reading” course (Anne Harding)
 - Training in working with children for support staff – 1
 - Will be developing this as part of project – 1
-
- None so far – 6

Procedures

Have you identified procedures that require changing? If so, have you made any changes, and what are these?

- LAC are not charged for overdue materials – 4
- BEWICH authorities creating a foster carers ticket/Foster families can get a special ticket and do not get charges for overdue or lost items – 2
- LAC not charged for lost items – 1
- Waived traditional joining requirements – 1
- Issue of specially encoded library tickets for LAC to allow overdue and replacement book charges to be waived – 1
- We no longer issue group tickets to children’s homes, but individual tickets to children – 1
- Joining procedures changed to allow LAC to obtain a library ticket without the need for a parental guarantor – 1
- Agreed that carers should not be financially responsible for items borrowed by children in their care – 1
- Agreed that foster carers are not charged for items borrowed by a LAC who is moved to another family – 1
- Foster Carers ticket with free audio loans, no overdue charges – 1
- Simplified joining procedures and modified ID requirements for LAC, whether in residential or foster care – 1
- Educational Social Worker (representing the corporate parent), not a foster carer, takes responsibility for a LAC’s library membership and signs the joining form – 1
- Reorganising reading group sessions to be “shorter, sharper and more casual and interactive” – 1
- Free issues of storytapes to LAC – 1

Identified only:

- Membership – 1
- Joining procedures – 2
- Overdue charges – 1
- Tickets – 1

Funding

Have you accessed external funding to provide these services? If so, where did the funding come from?

- Yes
 - PHF – 8
 - Social Services – 1
 - “Caring with Books” – 1
 - community Cohesion grant – 1
- No – 4

Other comments about funding:

- Need some “budget-boosters” – 1
- Need for funding for small-scale, short-term projects – 1
- All current activities developed within existing budgets and staffing – 1
- Corporate Parenting are buying in our services – 1

Any other points

Please feel free to make any other comments about your service provision for looked after children.

- Need to find funding for a project worker – 1
- We were focused on books, but, once we consulted LAC, the main thing they lacked was comics; we now pass on a wide range of comics to them – 1
- Think about all your services and how they can reach LAC – 1
- Education Officer for LAC works once a week in the library Study Support Centre, and has produced publicity targeted specifically towards LAC – 1
- Foster carers were given free supported sessions on Peoples Network computers when their children attended after-school sessions – very popular – 1
- Need to focus on needs of foster carers – 1

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